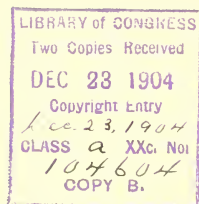




The Island of Sunshine

The Island of Sunshine

Verses by "Tropica"



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BY
MARY O. WALCOTT



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I know an island which the sun
Stays in his course to shine upon
As if it were for this green isle
Alone he kept his fondest smile !
Long his beams delaying flood
Its remotest solitude,
Mountain, dell, and palmy wood ;
And the coral sands around
That hear the blue sea's chiming sound.

.
Life is all entranced, and time
Passes like a tinkling rhyme.

. —EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN.

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THE ISLAND OF SUNSHINE



Jamaica.

O QUAIN'T old isle of hidden dreams!
Thy lonely paths, thy silent streams,
Thy woods and ancient ruins hold
Many a charming tale untold.

Many a fairy picture lies
Unnoticed 'neath thy tropic skies,
Waiting for artist yet unborn
To bring it from its haunts forlorn.

Many a sweet song no one sings
Sighs 'midst thy palms and crystal springs,
Trying in vain, like voiceless bird,
To make its strains of beauty heard.

Indefinable.

THEY ask what is the secret of the spell
That draws me southward from their land of snow;
I hear it calling like a far-off bell—
But whence the glamour comes I do not know.

As visionary as that tint of green—
Pale sea-shade, seen in dawn and twilight skies;
As undefined and dusky as the light
In woodland stretches, far from human eyes.

How can I tell why morning bird-calls thrill
The dreamer as he wakens from his sleep?
How do I know why dew-drops love to fill
The jasmine blooms that o'er my terrace creep?

Nay, rather ask me to explain the charm
Of wind-blown palms—of leaves that shrink and close—
The glimmer of the fire-flies in the grass—
The opening beauty of a Southern rose.

The Soul of the South.

THE Soul of the South is a dancer
Wreathed in a rainbow cloud,
Swaying to fitful music
Now dreamy, now soft, now loud;
Turning and whirling—glancing
A trembling star of night;
With footlights ever changing—
Now lurid, now dim, now bright.

The Soul of the South is a mourner
That silently stands and weeps;
No sound can be heard of its sorrow—
As still as a child that sleeps;
Yet deep in the hush of the evening
The flight of a falling leaf—
The murmuring voice of the river—
Something—who knows?—sighs “Grief.”

The Soul of the South is a baby,
A baby with roguish eyes;
A baby that laughs like a sunbeam
One moment—the next one, cries.
With a garland of crimson blossoms
Twined in its curly hair,
It looks up and smiles in mischief,
Knowing no thought of care.

An Island Grove.

THE sun shone through the leaves, and made
A dusky light, half-shine, half-shade;
And in the dreamy atmosphere
One felt that fairies might be near.

A strange, hushed stillness filled the place,
As if Time, charmed, had slowed his pace;
A woodsy scent perfumed the air
Of all the plants and wild-blooms there.

Uneven paths, o'ergrown by ferns,
Wound idly, with fantastic turns;
But no one knew to what retreat—
The wood-elves kept that secret sweet.

The trees grew wild, just as they willed,
And mosses gray their branches filled;
Sometimes I thought a face peeped down—
A tiny, mocking face, nut-brown.



"Now Rank Weeds thy Broken Arches Fill"

To an Old Aqueduct.

IN times long-past forgotten, thou wert new
Old aqueduct!—fresh-built by ancient skill,
When but a waste of trees was yonder hill,
And undisturbed the valley gold-ferns grew
While the young isle was fresh with morning dew.
But now rank weeds thy broken arches fill,
And thou art left alone—so lone and still—
To dream of sights and forms long hid from view.

One crossed thy grassy course the other day;
Far, far below a tiny brooklet flowed

And whispered to thee in low sylvan tones.
A tamarind tree grown wild once barred the road;
And once he found an orchid 'midst thy stones—
An orchid golden as a sunset ray.

Bronze and Green.

DANCING, glancing, swaying, playing,
Shimmering, glimmering, brightening, lightening,
Parting, darting, shining, twining,
Glowing in the sunlight's sheen—
Now green and bronze—now bronze and green.

Bending down in bronzy masses—
Turning, flashing, green as grasses;
Mingling till no light between
Pierces through the bronze and green.

Now, reluctant, letting through
Just a peep of cloud and blue;
By-and-by, a little more;
Then fast closing as before.

Brightening, lightening, shining, twining,
Parting, darting, beaming, gleaming,
Dancing, glancing, swaying, playing
Flashing, dashing, glittering, glowing—
The starapple leaves in the wind are blowing.

The Light Between the Logwood Leaves.

THE light between the logwood leaves
Out, in and out, its brightness weaves;
And silver spangles fill the trees
That change with every passing breeze.

The light between the logwood leaves
Grows mystic with the dusky eves;
But with the morning sun's first beam
A thousand splintered diamonds gleam.

Now here, now there, like restless stars,
The bits of light peep through green bars;
A bright imprisoned band that grieves
Shut close within the logwood leaves.

Yet how can dancing beams be sad?—
They 're Bo-peep players, blithe and glad;
Or else thy flickering glance deceives—
Ah, light between the logwood leaves!

Ferns.

ALL along the roadsides,
Over rocky walls,
Hidden 'midst the bushes,
Splashed by waterfalls,
Where the island streamlets
Sparkle on the ground,
Deep in tangled gullies—
There the ferns are found.

From the spreading tree-fern
With its leaves of lace,
To the tiny filmy,
All are full of grace;
Every crumbling ruin,
Every fallen stone,
Softens in to beauty
By the ferns o'ergrown.

Bright with golden powder,
Touched with silvery sheen,
Pink as shells of ocean,
Decked in tender green—
Star-leaves seed-embroidered,
Dainty maidenhair—
O'er our lovely island
Ferns are everywhere.



“ All Along the Roadsides ”

Star-Ferns.

WE wonder what becomes of fallen stars;—

Perhaps those ferns that in our valleys grow
Once burned high in the heavens, but were changed
To brown-veined leaves as they fell lost and low.

Bamboos.

GREAT feathers waving
Bright in the breeze,
Light as the surf-spray
On Southern seas;

Up hillsides curving,
Soft waves of green,
Meeting in arches,
Blue sky between.

O, the deep shadows
In dusky glades!
Blending unending
Green lights and shades;

Plumes of green leaflets,
Tossed by the breeze,
Like wavelets breaking
On Southern seas.



"Plumes of Green Leaflets"

Song of the Coffee Field.

IN blossom-time such showers
Of whiteness cloud the trees,
That one might think a snow-storm
Had blown across the seas;
But by the spicy odor
That fills the air, we know
'T is but a fall of flowers
And not of cold white snow.

When later come the berries
We watch them day by day,
Until beneath their burden
The branches bend and sway;
Then forth we wander gayly
The harvest bright to glean,
While red as Northern cherries
They glow amid the green.

And when the fields forsaken
Show harvest-time is past,
And only scattered berries
Still linger on—the last,
Though stripped of fruit and flowers,
No touch of winter grieves;
For chill winds have not taken
The glossy, dark-green leaves.

So whether flutter brightly
 Sweet blossoms in the breeze,
Or 'neath their weight of berries
 Bend low the laden trees—
Each season has its beauty;
 And if but leaves are there,
Some hint of promise lightly
 Is whispered through the air!

To the Donkey.

PATIENT little donkey!
 O 'er the dusty road
To the busy market
 Carrying your load;
Yams, bananas, plantains—
 In your hampers wide,
While a little Quashie
 Proudly sits astride.
And sometimes you carry
 Quashie's father too—
(Poor, weak, fragile creature!)
 Bigger far than you.

Cunning little donkey!
Garbed in Quaker gray,
Trotting so sedately
In your passive way;
Yet despite the meekness
In those gentle eyes,
You are shrewd, O donkey—
Very worldly-wise!
If your steps are too much
Hastened by the stick,
Then your docile manner
Changes:—and you kick.

Useful little donkey!
A true friend you are
When the human helpers
Seem but few and far;
And Jamaica's commerce
You do more to aid
Than some folk who wisely
Chatter of our trade.
With a shrewd, sly twinkle
In your eye you walk
Straight ahead—and get there,
While they talk and talk.

Noble little donkey!
Would n't it be grand

If your lead were followed
Throughout all this land!
“*Donkey* for a leader?”
Some say with a smile;



“Very Worldly-Wise”

Yes—be like the donkey—
Try it for a while!
Were we all as useful,
Donkey, as are you,
Then would prospects brighten
And our woes be few.

The Heart of the Island.

HE never has known the Island who never has watched the dew
On leaves in the early morning, before the gray sky is blue;
Who knows not the little thatched houses with coffee groves behind,
And feels not the glow of sunlight on white roads that ever wind.

He never has known the Island who never as friend has seen
The tiny white churches hidden far off in the hills of green;
Who never at "Social meetings" has joined in the laughter gay,
And eaten buns with the children, and felt the joy of the day.

He never has known the Island who never has truly known
And felt with the simple people, as if they were of his own;
Who never has talked with the woman bearing her market load,
And heard the yam-diggers singing at night on a lonely road.

He never will know the Island who feels no thrill at the roar
Of the sea that beats around it and splashes the palms on shore;
Who never can love the tangle of sea-grapes on the sand;
But the Island's heart is open to him who can understand!



“White Roads that Ever Wind”

Songs of Exile.

I.

THE moving lights and shadows of the South,—
The color-changes at the close of day,—
The shifting shades of green among the palms,—
The slightly-varying tones of leaves at play;

The blending greens and bronzes—all the wealth
Of color in the crotons' gorgeous hues;
Ah, moving lights and shadows of the South!
I tire of these clear, cold grays and blues.

II.

The landscape slowly fades away,
The woods in the distance die;
And slowly, strangely, amidst the gray,
A warm touch steals in the sky.

Where the maple stood a moment ago
Is a tree with leaves of lace,
And crimson blossoms that seem to glow
Like flames in the sombre place.

The Old Plantation Homes.

THEY are passing—passing swiftly, the old plantation homes ;
Those stately, spacious homes of long ago;
And of their vanished beauty, little to-day we know;—
The wanderer sees but fragments as he roams.

Yet still some mansions of the past remain,
With deeply carved walls and polished floors ;
In cobwebbed corners or behind dark doors
Sometimes still lurks a dim, mysterious stain.

They stand, reminders of far-off delights
When Wealth and Ease went blithely hand-in-hand;
Reminders of a time when our fair land
Was but a playground for gay lords and knights.

They are passing—passing swiftly, the old plantation homes ;
Of glittering days gone by—the pageant and the show—
Is left—a ruined arch, a gateway fallen low,
A fort fast crumbling where the wild sea foams.

Rose Hall.

ABOVE the sea, across the plain,
Through pale-green reaches of waving cane
That rustle low like the coming rain—
The white road leads by the gray stone wall
 To old Rose Hall.

Weather-beaten and plain outside,
Within, the moth and rust cannot hide
The beauty of doors and staircase wide;
And floor bright-polished as for a ball
 At old Rose Hall.

The house was built long, long ago,
As the careful finish and carvings show;
And the handiwork was sure and slow;
Else years gone by would have seen the fall
 Of old Rose Hall.

A queer old woman with a broom
Shows dusky stains in a certain room
And tells you . . . the shadows darker loom —
While thrice-repeated you hear a call
 Ring through Rose Hall.

You hear—if you 're one of the charming few
That stop not to ask—"A fact? 't is *true*?"

If not—why, of course the stains look new,
And the thrilling stories only pall
About Rose Hall.

You love the stairs—if you understand;
The crumbling cornice—the archway grand
As you look at the sea across the land
Through the waving canes, you feel it all,—
And know Rose Hall.

Twilight.

THE gold, the blue, and the crimson
Have paled and faded away;
And the skies that were lately so brilliant
Are covered with clouds of gray.

Out of my heart with the sunset
The glow of the tropics dies;
The gold and the blue and the crimson
That shone in the Southern skies.

At Mrs. Palmer's Monument.

WE watch the guardian spirit
 Hold gently o'er thy head
The never-fading garland,—
 And all the tales of dread
Flee like a dream, fair lady!
 The marble's dazzling cold
Makes far and dim those stories
 By harsh Tradition told.

What though a faint blue circle
 Just stains the perfect white,
And at its base the marble
 Is touched with crimson light?—
We heed not idle gossip
 Or half-forgotten tales,
That gather gruesome meaning
 When heard as daylight fails.

We cannot hate thee, lady,
 Here in this peaceful place,
So near the altar's roses,
 The guardian spirit's face;
Howe'er those ancient rumors
 And legends dark had birth,—
Thy monument speaks only
 Of kindness and of worth!



Retrospect.

THE long, straight stretches of palm-lined road,
The donkey trotting beneath its load,—
How real it seems to me!

The glow of the poinciana trees,
The bamboos like green plumes tossed in the breeze,—
Light as waves of the sea.

The heavy scent of the noontide air,
The broom-flowers' droop in the sun's hot glare,—
The South 's all red and gold!

The gray-walled works of the lone estate,
The rusty boiler down by the gate,—
So old, so old, so old.

The cotton tree with its twisted vines,
The mangrove swamp where the sun never shines,—
Dusky at height of day.

What is the end of this endless strife?
O, the days are stern when one's dream leaves life!—
The South is far away.



"The Cotton Tree"

A Picture—Unpainted.

IN the foreground a moss-grown stone trough
Where horses no longer drink,
And unchecked weeds and grasses
Peep over the broken brink;
Then far waste stretches of logwood;
In the distance a strip of gray
Where the ocean, like dull-hued silver,
Shines in the dying day;
The red sky burns and flushes,
Unanswered by sea below;
And highest, dark clouds are glooming,
Shot through with a sullen glow.

The Undertone.

But hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity.

—WORDSWORTH.

BENEATH the brightness of the Southern day
I seem to hear a dull, half-stifled moan;
Beneath the mirthful sound of children's play
A low, complaining note—the undertone.

The far, faint cry of wounded slaves in chains;
The struggle of some falling soul alone;
The blood that darkens with its crimson stains
A girlish hand—these are the undertone.

The sins and sorrows of those far-off times
Whose echoes are to us so faintly blown;
The cruel deeds beneath the flowering limes
(As fair as now)—these are the undertone.

Beneath the brightness of the Southern day
I seem to hear a dull, half-stifled moan;
“Old nurses’ tales!” “All nonsense!” do you say?
Ah, mind your words! Hark—hear the undertone!



When the Sunlight Touches the River.

WHEN the sunlight touches the river, and a bend that was lost to view
In the shadows of dusky daylight, springs from the haze of blue,
Our eyes catch the careless motion, and dance with the dazzling gleam
When the sunlight touches the river, and wakens the silent stream.

When the sunlight touches the river, in the freshness of early day,
And the sober path of the waters ripples and laughs in play,
The soul comes forth from its shadows, forgetful of fancied wrong,
For the sunlight touches the river, and wakens the heart with song!

An Island Spring.

FROM the cool rock-filters
Many times distilled,
With the mountain freshness
And pure coldness filled,
Comes a tiny trickle,
Just a silver gleam,—
This is the beginning
Of an island stream!

Winding on with many
Sudden, wayward turns;
Splashing as it passes
Merrily the ferns;
Dashing, half in fury,
Half in boisterous play,
'Gainst a mossy boulder
That has barred its way.

'Neath the lace of leaf-work
By roseapples made,
Flowing gently, softly,
In the cool green shade;
Now through arching bamboos—
Then slow-gliding where
Fragrant ginger-lilies
Scent the evening air.

Lingering for a moment
In a rocky pool,
Watching soft-eyed cattle
Drink the water cool,—
Children filling bamboos,—
Women washing clothes;
Then with restless motion
Onward still it goes.

Soon it ceases, playing
In a waterfall,
Hearing not the voices
Of the great deep call;
Till some kindly river
Takes it 'neath its wing,
And flows seaward with our
Little island spring!

Under the Roseapple Boughs.

THE play of light on the water—the mingled darkness and shine—
The blending of real and vision where shadow and leaf entwine—
The cool, clear green of the water where silently drink the cows,
All in the hush of evening—under the roseapple boughs.

The network of bending branches that peep in the stream below,
And sway with a wind-swept motion, silently, soft, and slow;
The sky and the sun-flecked water—the shadows, the resting cows—
The peace and the beauty of evening—under the roseapple boughs.



"Broad Wind-Frayed Leaves"

In a Banana Walk.

LONG aisles made dusky by broad wind-frayed leaves
That bend and arch the narrow pathway o'er
Like green waves curving as they reach the shore.
Some touched with yellow of the autumn sheaves—
Not bright, but as a beam of sun that grieves
Left lonely when its comrades shine no more.
Like sunset rays that pierce a fretted door
Through emerald lattice-work a dull light weaves.

No sound is heard, no varying color seen,
Save here and there a dash of daring red
Where—flame of harmless fire in the grass—
Some wilding lily glows amid the green;
Or from the cool, dim archway overhead
A polished leaf sways slowly as we pass.

The Golden Table.

(A Legend of the Rio Cobre.)

SPARKLING, flashing, gleaming, glowing,
Where no eye can see its rays,
Rests the mystic Golden Table
Dreaming dreams of olden days.
'Neath the Cobre's silver waters
It has lain for ages long;
And an undertone of warning
Mingles with the river's song.

Just at noon (so says the legend)
Comes the Table every day
Softly to the river's surface,
Where the yellow sunbeams play;
For one magic moment lingers,
Then sinks slowly out of sight,
While its crystal prison shimmers
In a cloud of burnished light.



"The Cobre's Silver Waters"

Since it sank that far-off evening
 'Midst the lightning and the rain,
Never man has found the Table;
 All his seeking has been vain.
Still the jealous Cobre guards it,
 Safe concealed from human eye,—
While it charms its golden captive
 With an endless lullaby.

A Mountain Manse.

FAR up among the mountains,
Reached by a path o'ergrown
By ferns and tangled creepers,—
An old Manse stands alone.

Green hills and purple mountains
Like guardians rise about;
From two peaks in the distance
A bit of sea gleams out.

Within the yard a mango
Spreads great roots gnarled and old,
And tamarind trees their lace-work
Of feathery leaves unfold.

Behind a veil of palm-fronds
The shy Manse hides unseen,
And peeps through breeze-blown branches
Safe in its bower of green.

The great world whirls forgotten;
Here a charmed silence lies—
While the old Manse stands dreaming
Beneath the Southern skies.

Job's Tears.

And he sat down among the ashes.

—JOB ii. 8.

If one dark ash-stained tear-drop in its course
Had been arrested by some magic force
And crystallized into a polished bead
It would have been like this gray, ashen seed;
Which, with no flash of diamond, sheen of pearl,
Seems jewel made for modest Quaker girl.
A touch of Job's own rare poetic flame
Had he—or she—who first conceived the name;
And watched the wild plants, growing green and lush
By marsh and stream, like Bildad's flag and rush.
The world's great drama, fresh through countless years,
Comes to us always when we see "Job's Tears."

Natural Bridge.

A GIANT arch not made by human hands,
But hewn by Nature from the solid rock;
In vain the patient, waiting centuries knock
Against the massive walls, and still it stands
Above its river sparkling o'er the sands,
Firm and unmoved by time and earthquake shock.

Far down below, gray wave-worn boulders block
The river's path. Along the walls bold bands
Of restless, twittering swallows fly about,
Their music blending with the water's sound.
Wee bird-heads from a thousand airy nests
Peep, filled with birdling wonder, shyly out.
Dull muffled echoes dimly ring around;
But 'neath the noise a mighty silence rests.



At Daybreak.

O THE freshness of the morning in the South!

The cool blue shadows underneath the hills;

The purple haze that with elusive light

The mist-encircled mountain-valley fills.

O the freshness of the morning in the South!

The palm-leaves quivering with their weight of dew—

The wakening sun that peeps down, faintly bright—

The sky's cold gray just melting into blue.

O the freshness of the morning in the South!

The silence in the hush of opening day—

Before the work-sounds come to break the charm

And still the music of the elves at play.



Nana.

WITH the old homes are going
The Nanas of past days,
With their gay stiff-starched kerchiefs
And dear old-fashioned ways;
They disappeared with other
Quaint things too good to last;
And seldom now we see them—
Those pictures of the past!

The strange "Anancy" stories,
And legends weird and old
Which after patient coaxing
Were in the twilight told
To breathless, wide-eyed children—
We hardly hear to-day;
A few faint echoes linger—
The rest have passed away.

But in the days of plenty,
When "Old Jamaica" flowed,
And heavy, lumbering coaches
Rolled o'er the dusty road,—
When railway, street car, tourist,
Were to the isle unknown,—
Then each true household boasted
A "Nana" of its own.

The children came to Nana
With every trifling tear,
And feared no foe in armor
When her strong arm was near;
For childish ills no doctor
Was torn from sleep at night;
A cup of Nana's "bush-tea,"—
And all would soon be right.

At christenings and weddings
 She played a shining part,
And every household function
 Owned Nana as its heart ;
At balls she peeped through doorways
 To see “ Young Missis ” dance,
And beamed if for a moment
 She caught the girl’s bright glance.

While all else changed around her
 She kept the same old place,
Till like some faithful guide-post
 Became the kindly face;
For to “ Ole Massa’s fam’ly ”
 Her life was rooted fast :
In fancy we can see her—
 The Nana of the past!

Christmas in Jamaica.

SOFT snow-white bells bloom every year
As soon as Christmas-time draws near;
And children by the wayside stop
To pluck the dainty "Christmas Pop."

The sugar-cane comes out in bloom
And thrusts aloft its silken plume;
Each little shrub dons garments gay
In honor of the holiday.

Though the keen breath of Northern pines
Is missing, yet, all draped in vines,
Fair as its rival o'er the sea,
The *lignum-vitæ* makes our tree.

And on the Christmas evening bright
The "Great-house" grand is full of light;
While Christmas joy and glad good-will
The dusky Southern faces fill.

Each servant of the house is there—
From Nana, dressed with Sunday care,
To little Quamin, whose round eyes
Are full of wonder and surprise.

As "Father Christmas" to each hands
The gift that most his need demands,

Some telling "local hit" he makes,
At which the hall with laughter shakes.

He says,—“ Though of small use to-day
My prancing steeds and jingling sleigh,
A donkey and two hampers wide
Holds well my store ; I like to ride.

“ I 've spent so many busy hours
Looking for tempting fruit and flowers,
Within the Christmas markets bright,
To deck our Christmas tree to-night.

“ For I know Southern girls and boys
Are just as fond of sweets and toys
As those small rogues who used to try
To snow-ball me as I flew by.”

The storied strains of minstrel's lute
For many ages have been mute;
But just as sweet to untrained ear
The concertina that we hear.

Many a joyous laugh rings gay
From those who at "snap-dragon" play;
And many a finger in the flame
Gets burnt as wilder grows the game.

To make the merry scene complete,
Oft a quick sound of hurrying feet
Is heard as blushing maidens go
Past the huge bunch of mistletoe.

For strange would seem a Christmas night
Without that ancient parasite;
And North and South must both bow low
Before the reign of Mistletoe.

Through open doors a faint perfume
Of jasmine comes and fills the room;
Some voice sings soft beneath the mirth—
“ Good-will to men, and peace on earth.”



"The Little Fort "

At Robin's Bay.

At Robin's Bay the cool, fresh scent of brine
Is mingled with the sweet breath of the kine ;
For in the quiet pastures cattle graze—
Above the crags where foamy water plays—
Around the fortress where the wild figs twine.

Keep thy old ruined castle on the Rhine!
The little fort unstoried shall be mine;
All glorified by Fancy's golden haze—
At Robin's Bay.

Though far away I see the bright waves shine,
Or in the twilight watch the distant line
Where white ships glide—the ships of other days;
And hear the ocean, while the last sun-rays
Touch the green almond with its arching vine—
At Robin's Bay.

An Eastern Note.

THERE is an Eastern note within our land.—
A foreign flower springing up alone
Has, ere we knew it, in our garden grown;
A blossom whose first breath of life was fanned
In its far home on "India's coral strand."
A throbbing minor movement not our own
Lends to the South its weird elusive tone,
Like strain of alien music in a band.

A tangled mass of waveless, coal-black hair;
A flash of silver on a brown, bare arm;
Deep eyes like bits of star-strewn midnight sky.
With head erect, a proudly distant air,
And gliding motion fraught with subtle charm,—
Like crownèd queen the Eastern girl goes by.

Blinkeys.

LITTLE brown-clad insects, so demurely drest,
Those bright starry lanterns hardly suit the rest
Of your simple costume ; you are Quaker maids
Mingling costly jewels with plain, quiet shades!
But perhaps that dusky satin garb you wear
Serves but as a setting for the lamps you bear.

They are wondrous lanterns, and their mystic light
With a clear soft brilliance penetrates the night ;
Not like hard, cold diamond—softer, tenderer far;
Like the glow of moonlight, or the evening star.
If that liquid lustre could be crystallized,
More than pearl or ruby would its worth be prized.

When night falls around us, then your wee lamps glow
In the trees' dark branches, on the ground below;
You are busy, blinkeys, though you seem to play;
You are "on for duty" at the close of day;
And your work is simply—with unceasing gleam
To make all this island like a fairy dream!

Night.

TWILIGHT brief is dying,
And the shadows fall;
From the still, dark bushes
Comes the night-bird's call;
Thousands of wee insects
Start their evening choirs;
On the dusky hillsides
Glow the orange fires.

Jewel-lights of blinkeys
Sparkle all around;
From the far-off highroad
Slow winds bring the sound
Of yam-diggers singing
On their home-return;
Deeper grow the shadows;
Bright the fires burn.

All the rounded curvings
Of the mountains die;
Close they stand, sharp-outlined
'Gainst a painted sky;
They are hills in Stageland—
We are at a play;
When this act is finished,
They will fade away.

Fair the scene, and life-like!—

Now a sudden change

Comes: a light is rising

O'er the pictured range!

Softly plays the music

(All will vanish soon)—

While between the bamboos

Peeps the tropic moon.

The Tourist.

WHEN the soft Southern breezes
Hold a faint, distant hint
Of that strong Northern tonic
That gives the leaves their tint,—
Then comes the Tourist to us
Our sunny days to share;
All brisk, alert, and smiling,
And gay and debonair.

He revels in bananas
(A hand he calls a "bunch")—
Eats them each day for breakfast,
For dinner and for lunch;
Mistakes our Avocados
For luscious Bartlett pears;
Instead of gills gives shillings—
Pays busmen dollar fares.

A battered cutlass charms him;
How pleasing to display—
"A famous machete, blunted
In many a bygone fray";
While happy rum-shop keepers
Sell all their mildewed signs,
And flaunt bright new ones, showing
The same "old-world" designs.



"He Revels in Bananas"

He buys cracked threepence soup-plates,
And thinks his bargain rare,
To get for half-a-dollar
Such curious ancient ware;
He "tips" the lucky native
If he but lifts his hand;
And brings a stir and sparkle
To this old sleepy land.

It 's simply a long picnic
When, tired of Life's race,
He comes to play a moment
In this strange palm-girt place;
He overlooks our failures,—
Bears good-will toward all men;
And when he sails, the breezes
Sigh seaward, "Come again!"

The Glory of Jamaica.

WHEN first our mountains' purple across the waves was seen,
And wondering eyes first watched it change slowly into green,
Perhaps the weary sailors forgot their golden quest,
As Fancy brought them pictures of endless peace and rest,
That peace which calms the spirit, the restless heart-beat stills—
The peace beyond all knowledge that rests upon the hills.

Though here a crumbling ruin, and there a fort o'ergrown,
Tell of the vanished splendor of times now little known,
Still rise the fadeless mountains, as beautiful to-day
As when Columbus saw them, mist-circled, far away;
First sight to greet the native and thrill his loyal heart—
The last to leave the vision as outbound ships depart.

With rainbow lights of promise forever touched they stand,
Like sentinels immortal to guard our precious land;
The only blight of winter the wooded summits know
Is the morning mist around them like wreaths of Alpine snow.
And the true heart of Jamaica with proud affection fills
For the Island's greatest glory—her guard of noble hills.

The South to the North.

AH, something subtly sweet has left one's life
When these encircling mountains fade from view,
And all the palm-lined shore seems strange and new
As outbound ship glides far upon the blue.

The deep, bewildering scent of Southern flowers,
The freshness of green palms that ever sway,
The dazzling blue of skies at height of day,—
Something has gone, when these are gone away.

The song of mountain springs is rudely hushed
By martial tones more harsh than trumpets' blare;
A lingering fragrance of the flowers fair
Is crushed by the sharp, cruel Northern air.

Life seems a tract of moorland bleak and gray,
With no gleam of the South's rich red and gold;
Sharp, piercing winds the trembling limbs enfold,
And all is outer darkness, gloom and cold.

The North to the South.

WHEN something leaves one's life—the heavy scent
Of Southern flowers, weighted down by dew;
The sensuous sway of bending palms—the arch
Of noonday skies, one broad expanse of blue ;

The simple joy of living, unperplexed
By life's rough battle in the world's mad glare;
The low, soft sound of mountain streams, instead
Of horns and fifes and noisy trumpets' blare—

Then comes the stronger, fiercer joy of work—
Hard fight and struggle 'gainst a powerful foe;
The hail—the driving sleet—the piercing cold—
The winter's chilling ice and blinding snow.

The bitter tonic of the Northern winds
Is kinder than the flowers' sweet perfume;
And gentler than the Southern light and warmth
Is all the cold, the darkness, and the gloom.

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